

TO: City of Tukwila Planning Commission

FROM: Brandon J. Miles, Senior Planner

DATE: March 24, 2010

RE: Sign Code Update
Billboard Regulations

Background

The City of Tukwila currently contains approximately 20 billboards. Most of these billboards are located in annexation areas such as along Tukwila International Boulevard and East Marginal Way in the Manufacturing Industrial Center Area. The current code defines billboards as "...a sign or visual communication device, its structure and component parts, whose principal use is the advertising or promotion of a service or product normally in the general market area but not for sale or rent on the immediate premises" (TMC 19.08.050).

The City currently bans billboards in most areas of the City. New billboards are permitted on West Valley Highway south of S. 180th Street and along Interurban Ave South north of Interstate 5.

As noted in the "Sign Code Advisory Policy Recommendations", the Sign Code Advisory Committee recommended that no new billboards be permitted in the City. During the Sign Code Advisory Committee deliberations on the issue of billboards Clear Channel Outdoors (CCO) suggested some creative solutions to deal with billboards in the City. One solution was the idea of relocating existing billboards from areas of the City where they may be inappropriate to less sensitive areas of the City. The Sign Code Advisory Committee was generally supportive of such an idea, provided that the net number of billboards within the City was reduced.

In the fall when the Planning Commission was briefed on the recommendations of the Sign Code Advisory Committee they affirmed a commitment to reduce the number of billboards in certain areas of the City. The Planning Commission also discussed the idea of establishing billboard receiving areas for the placement of new billboards in the City.

The areas of the City that the Planning Commission accepted as billboard receiving areas were:

1. West Valley Highway, south of 180th Street;
2. East Marginal Way, north of Boeing Access Road;
3. Boeing Access Road; and
4. Commercial properties along 518

Staff has conducted an initial review of these four areas and at this time is recommending that locations number three and four be removed. Federal and State requirements would present obstacles to placement of billboards in these areas of the City.

The remaining two areas, along West Valley Highway and East Marginal Way, could be good candidates for areas to allow new billboards. One of the issues in designating a receiving area for new billboards is finding an area that works for both the City and billboard companies. For billboard companies the area needs to be well traveled and for the City the area should not hinder future redevelopment plans nor should residents be impacted. Billboard receiving areas along West Valley Highway and East Marginal Way can meet both the City and billboard companies' needs. West Valley Highway and East Marginal Way have high traffic volumes and both areas are outside of major redevelopment areas for the City and are not near residential areas.

Preliminary Code Language

Staff is still working on draft code language; however staff wanted to provide the Planning Commission an overview of what the billboard chapter of the new sign code will address.

1. New billboards will only be allowed in the designated "receiving areas" as depicted in the attached map.
2. In order to install a billboard in these receiving areas an applicant will be required to secure the removal of a certain number of billboards in other parts of the City. The billboards removed cannot be in areas designated as "receiving areas". The number of existing billboards required to be removed will depend on the type of new billboard proposed. A new static billboard will require the removal of 3-5 existing billboards. A new digital billboard will require the removal of 5-7 existing billboards.
3. The number of faces for the new billboard will be capped at two.
4. Specifications on the height, sign area, and setback will be provided. Modifications in the development standards will be used to encourage the billboard entity to allow public service announcements on any digital billboards.
5. Existing billboards in the City that are not proposed to be removed can be refurbished provided that at least one other billboard in the City is removed.
6. The area of the refurbished billboard can be increased slightly as a reflection that the billboard company has removed a billboard.
7. The location of the refurbished billboard must remain unchanged unless the billboard can be relocated in order to allow the billboard to meet setbacks. The refurbished billboards will not be allowed to get closer to any residentially zoned property.
8. Refurbished billboards cannot be converted into digital displays.

Recommendation

The Sign Code Advisory Committee and Planning Staff support code language which will encourage the removal and relocation of billboards within the City. The code update process provides the City a unique opportunity to reduce the net number of billboards within the City.

Next Steps

Staff is working on draft code language to present to the Planning Commission at the next meeting. Staff would like initial buyoff from the Planning Commission on items 1-8 listed above.

